

REGION 6 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOPIC: San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site

DATE: March 16, 2016

PURPOSE: For Information

DEADLINE DATE: N/A

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BACKGROUND:

The San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site is situated east of the City of Houston along I-10 and once operated as a paper mill pulp disposal site. The pits were built in the mid-1960s along the banks of the San Jacinto River for disposal of pulp wastes containing dioxins. The former waste pits are currently partially submerged due to subsidence. In 2008, the site was added to the National Priorities List and in 2009, EPA issued an order to International Paper Company and McGinnes Industrial Maintenance Corporation, the Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs), to conduct a site investigation. A removal action was also completed by the PRP's in July 2011 to install a temporary armor cap over the impoundments. The armor cap has experienced several erosion and/or damage events requiring repair in 2012, 2013, and 2015.

CURRENT STATUS:

- PRPs visual inspection on February 24, 2016, during an extremely low tide found five small areas (about 1-foot by 3-feet) of exposed geotextile fabric on the eastern part of the cap. There should have been a 1-foot thick rock layer covering the geotextile.
- Inspection reported to EPA on March 4, 2016. The EPA directed the PRPs to define and repair the areas, and on March 10, 2015, under EPA oversight, the PRPs probed the cap to determine presence of the liner and rock cover. The areas without sufficient rock were marked for placement of additional rock. The liner was intact in all affected areas, and no waste material was exposed.
- Repairs to add rock cover over the exposed areas under EPA oversight were completed on March 15, 2016.
- Manual probing of eastern cell at 400 locations to check for adequate cap thickness, as well as initial installation of enhanced buoy system, to be completed by March 18, 2016. Camera monitoring system to be installed week of March 21, 2016.

ENVIRONMENTAL/PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS:

- Fish consumption advisories in place for San Jacinto River; fish consumption limited to no more than one 8-ounce meal per month; children and pregnant women should not eat any species of fish.

TECHNICAL CONCERNS:

- Bathymetric surveys during inspections did not indicate any cap deficiencies.
- The cause of the missing rock cover is unknown. The Corps of Engineers is performing an assessment to find causes and recommend improvements in cap safety and inspection protocols.

REGULATORY/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Requirements of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Port of Houston, Army Corps of Engineers, Harris County, and others may apply depending on the final remedy selected.
- Established a Special Clean Water Act permit area regarding dredging and disposal in Site vicinity.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS:

- Texans Together (a community organization), Harris County, Galveston Bay Foundation, and others have expressed desires that the waste material be removed.

RECOMMENDATIONS/SCHEDULE:

- Install cameras for enhanced surveillance and additional buoys around cap. (March 2016)
- Develop additional cap protective measures. (April 2016)
- Develop enhanced inspection procedures. (April 2016)

